

Message Text

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11
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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 3519

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, NO
SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO SVALBARD (JULY 9-12, 1976)

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER NORDLI MADE A 4-DAY VISIT TO SVALBARD JULY 9-12. THE TRIP SYMBOLIZED THE IMPORTANCE THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT ATTACHES TO ITS ARCTIC POSSESSION AND TO EXERCISING ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE ISLAND. NONETHELESS, THE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO IGNORE OR DISOBEY NORWEGIAN ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS ON SVALBARD PRESENTING THE GOVERNMENT WITH A DIFFICULT PROBLEM IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS POWERFUL NEIGHBOR. END SUMMARY

2. PRIME MINISTER NORDLI, ACCOMPANIED BY INDUSTRY MINISTER GJERDE, OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND A NUMBER OF NEWSMEN, PAID A HIGHLY PUBLICIZED VISIT TO SVALBARD JULY 9-12. THE VISIT WHICH WAS APPARENTLY ONLY THE SECOND EVER BY A NORWEGIAN PRIME MINISTER, WAS CLEARLY INTENDED TO SIGNAL THE
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IMPORTANCE THE GOVERNMENT ATTACHES TO THE ISLAND.

3. DURING HIS TRIP, NORDLI VISITED VARIOUS NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS ON THE ISLAND. HE STRESSED TO THEM HIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO EXERCISE NORWAY'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE ISLANDS AND NOTED THAT THE GON IS SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE INTERNAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION OF ITS SVALBARD ADMINISTRATION. HE ALSO VISITED THE SVEA COAL MINE, WHICH HE ANNOUNCED SHOULD BE BY 1980 THE SITE OF ONE OF NORWAY'S LARGEST INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES. (THE GON HOPES TO DEVELOP THE MINES AT A COST OF ALMOST \$200 MILLION TO PRODUCE ONE MILLION TONS OF COAL PER YEAR. THE NEW ENTERPRISE WILL ALSO INVOLVE A NEW NORWEGIAN COMMUNITY OF ABOUT 1000 PEOPLE AT SVEA.)

4. THE HIGH POINT OF NORDLI'S VISIT WAS A 5-HOUR VISIT TO THE SOVIET COMMUNITY AT BARENTSBURG. IN A SPEECH TO THE RESIDENT SOVIET CONSUL THERE, THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSED THAT HIS VISIT TO "ONE OF OUR ISLANDS" WAS AN ORDINARY AND ROUTINE EVENT WHICH HAPPENED TO COME AS PART OF HIS TOUR TO THE NORTH OF NORWAY. HE NOTED THAT THE SVALBARD TREATY GAVE NORWAY FULL SOVEREIGNTY OVER SVALBARD AND SAID THAT NORWAY'S OBJECTIVE WAS THAT ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES THERE SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN A "HARMONIOUS AND PEACEFUL MANNER."

5. NORDLI ALSO TOLD HIS SOVIET AUDIENCE THAT NORWAY HAD PUT INTO EFFECT A NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES TO REGULATE ACTIVITIES LIKE TRAFFIC, AVIATION, AND CONSERVATION, WOULD "PURSUE AN ACTIVE POLICY" ON SVALBARD AND WOULD FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS THERE CLOSELY. HE ENDED HIS SPEECH BY HOPING THAT THE PRESENT GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SOVIET AND NORWEGIAN CITIZENS ON SVALBARD WOULD CONTINUE.

6. IN A TV INTERVIEW AFTER THE TRIP, NORDLI WAS ASKED IF NORWEGIAN SOVEREIGNTY ON SVALBARD CAN BE SUFFICIENTLY STRESSED. HE REPLIED THAT "I THINK IT IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO STRESS WHAT IS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF NORWEGIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER SVALBARD...(WHICH IS) TO ENFORCE THE TREATY'S PROVISIONS IN A WAY THAT SUPPORTS THE SPIRIT WHICH UNDERLIES THE TREATY--NAMELY, THAT SVALBARD IS NOT TO BE USED FOR MILITARY PURPOSES BUT FOR PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT. THIS IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO STRESS." HE ADDED THAT NORWEGIAN ADMINISTRATION ON SVALBARD WILL

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NOW HAVE TO BE STRENGTHENED AND CENTRALIZED.

7. TO UNDERScore THE GON'S INTENTION TO ADMINISTER THE ISLAND MORE ACTIVELY, THE JUSTICE MINISTRY ISSUED NEW REGULATIONS FOR MORE STRINGENT CONTROL OF ALIENS ON SVALBARD THE DAY NORDLI ARRIVED THERE. THE NEW REGULATIONS WILL EMPOWER SVALBARD'S GOVERNOR TO EXPELL ANY PERSON WHO IS SUSPECTED OF BREAKING A LAW OR RULE APPLYING TO SVALBARD.

8. THE VISIT WAS GIVEN HIGH MARKS BY THE NORWEGIAN PRESS INCLUDING THE NON-SOCIALIST PAPERS WHICH LIKED THE REPEATED TALK ABOUT NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. PICKING UP NORDLI'S REFRAIN, THE LABOR PARTY'S PAPER "ARBEIDERBLADET" NOTED THAT "A TOP OBJECTIVE OF NORWEGIAN ACTIVITY IN THE NORTHERN AREAS" IS TO KEEP TENSIONS THERE LOW. "NORWAY'S CONSISTENT OBSERVATION OF THE SVALBARD TREATY DEMILITARIZATION PROVISION IS ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RELATIONS OF TENSIONS IN OUR PART OF THE WORLD." THE PAPER ALSO CALLED FOR A MORE ACTIVE NORWEGIAN ADMINISTRATION ON SVALBARD.

9. ACCORDING TO AN MFA OFFICIAL WHO ACCOMPANIED NORDLI, ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS HAVE APPARENTLY FULLY COMPLIED WITH THE AGREEMENT ON STATIONING THEIR WIVES AT LONGYEARBYEN AIRPORT (OSLO 1836), THEY CONTINUE TO IGNORE NORWEGIAN REGULATIONS IN MANY OTHER AREAS. THE SOVIETS STILL REFUSE TO REGISTER THEIR CARS OR GROWING HELICOPTER FLEET UNDER NORWEGIAN REGULATIONS. THEY HAVE REFUSED TO REGISTER THEIR POWER PLANT AT BARENTSBURG AND WILL NOT COMPLY WITH NORWEGIAN SAFETY REGULATIONS IN THEIR BARENTSBURG COAL MINES. THE SOVIETS AND NORWEGIANS HAD UNPRODUCTIVE TECHNICAL TALKS ON THESE ISSUES TWO YEARS AGO. THE FOREIGN MINISTER RAISED THE ISSUE WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR KIRICHENKO THIS SPRING. STILL, ACCORDING TO OUR MFA SOURCE, THE SOVIETS ARE NOT COMPLYING.

10. IT IS AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THIS SOVIET NONCOMPLIANCE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSED THE NEED FOR A STRENGTHENED NORWEGIAN ADMINISTRATION OF THE ISLAND. AND THE DECREE OF JULY 9 WILL GIVE THE ISLAND'S GOVERNOR MORE AUTHORITY TO DEAL WITH UNCOOPERATIVE ALIENS, THOUGH IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THE GON WILL AUTHORIZE HIM TO USE IT AGAINST THE SOVIETS.

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11. COMMENT: THE TRIP WAS A GOOD DEMONSTRATION OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS TO EXERCISE FULL SOVEREIGNTY OVER SVALBARD. IT CERTAINLY ELPED THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS PARTY POLITICALLY AS SEEN BY THE FAVORABLE RESPONSE EVEN OPPOSITION PAPERS GAVE THE VISIT. HOWEVER, THE NORWEGIANS STILL HAVE SOME POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS WITH THE SOVIET COMMUNITY ON SVALBARD WHICH UNLESS DEALT WITH VIGOROUSLY COULD EMBARRASS THE LABOR GOVERNMENT.
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